



NEWS RELEASE

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Project SEARCH RECOGNIZED BY GOV. HEINEMAN

Tour of Embassy Suites & Courtyard by Marriot, an Omaha-La Vista training center, kicks off National Disability Employment Month in October

Project SEARCH exemplifies the strength of partnerships in providing benefits to young adults with disabilities.

Nebraska's job-driven training program has graduated 206 young adults with disabilities since the first site opened its doors in 2009.

In recognition of National Disability Employment Month, Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman today toured Embassy Suites & Courtyard by Marriott, Omaha-La Vista, a Project SEARCH job training site.

"I want to congratulate Project SEARCH on their continued successes helping young adults with disabilities obtain the opportunity for independence," said Gov. Heineman. "These young adults, Project SEARCH's business partners, and the state benefit from these efforts."

Project SEARCH teacher Jackie Brown and Embassy Sales Director David Scott guided the tour of the business-led, school-to-work program. Project SEARCH graduates who now work at the hotel as well as current interns talked with Gov. Heineman, telling him about their job training experiences.

"Project SEARCH allows youth who are transitioning from school to work to learn real-world job skills, giving them the opportunity for independence," Nebraska VR Director Mark Schultz said. "It also helps businesses see what great employees individuals with disabilities are in the workplace."

Nebraska VR, Embassy Suites & Courtyard by Marriott Omaha-La Vista, schools, the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Assistive Technology Partnership and the Nebraska Division of Developmental Disabilities are among Project SEARCH's partners.

The employment training program's 12 sites across Nebraska combine classroom instruction, career exploration and hands-on job training.

Project SEARCH was developed at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center to give young adults with disabilities an opportunity to explore careers and receive training. Students report to a host business, learn employment skills in a classroom and gain job skills while participating in three or four internships during the year. The goal is to help students gain independence and competitive employment. Local Business Advisory Boards play an important role in creating successful programs and identifying potential employers for Project SEARCH graduates.

The Embassy Suites & Courtyard by Marriott partnership was formed in 2012 to address needs in the hotel industry. Nationally, about 65 percent of Project SEARCH graduates are employed. In Nebraska, about 75 percent of the graduates statewide are employed while 100 percent the young adults who graduated from the Embassy Suites & Courtyard program are employed.

“Historically, Nebraska VR has worked collaboratively with schools across the state, focusing on assisting students with disabilities in their transition from school to work,” said Mark Mason, Nebraska VR Transition Program Director. “Students work individually with an employment specialist so they better understand their disability, how it impacts them on the job and to identify services required for them to live independently with gainful employment.

“These job-driven training initiatives offer interns the opportunity to learn transferable and marketable skills while fulfilling the needs of a business and a community,” Mason said.

This year, 81 young adults are enrolled statewide in Project SEARCH. Nebraska VR’s business partners include:

Business Partner	Start Date	Number of Graduates to Date	Enrolled 2014/2015
Columbus Community Hospital	2011	11	4
Embassy Suites La Vista/Omaha	2012	17	10
Embassy Suites/Lincoln	2012	15	10
Embassy Suites/Old Market	2013	4	9
Faith Regional Health Services - Norfolk	2010	17	4
Good Samaritan Medical Center - Kearney	2009	26	5
Mary Lanning Health Care - Hastings	2011	16	7
Sioux City Medical Center	2013	3	7
St. Elizabeth Medical Center - Lincoln	2010	25	4
St. Francis Medical Center – Grand Island	2009	34	6
Wal-Mart Distribution Center – North Platte	2010	28	9
York General Hospital	2012	10	6
		206	81

For more information about Nebraska VR’s Project SEARCH partnerships:

http://vr.nebraska.gov/partners/project_search.html

To learn more about Nebraska VR’s comprehensive employment services for individuals with disabilities, go to <http://vr.nebraska.gov/>